

To: Senate Ways and Means Committee

From: Erik Sartorius, Executive Director

Date: February 18, 2020

RE: Proponent for SB 375

I want to thank the Senate Ways and Means Committee for giving the League of Kansas Municipalities the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 375.

SB 375 would enact FORWARD, the state's transportation program. FORWARD is the latest in a long line of KDOT comprehensive programs over the past 30 years and is the successor to T-works.

The bill adjusts several statutes to make provisions for the new approach. Included in the provisions are arrangements for alternative delivery procurement and programs to assist local government units in various aspects of transportation. It includes provisions for broadband infrastructure improvement with matching funds from local authorities.

There is a pressing need for assistance to allow cities to maintain existing transportation infrastructure, to improve it to serve our next generations, and to get the right mix for all road users. FORWARD by no means provides a panacea for the State's transportation challenges, but it holds promise in maintaining structures that have worked successfully in prior programs and bringing innovation to other aspects of transportation funding.

FORWARD is built on an encouraging process of consultation with communities and stakeholders all over the state. If it is fully funded over its lifetime, the program does provide more flexible tools for local government partnership with the State than previous iterations, and the League supports this approach. Examples are the benefits for rural communities to access or improve broadband, and the emphasis under FORWARD on ongoing project selection, rather than only once in a ten-year cycle. The plan accommodates the diversity of community needs, reflected through programs for aviation needs, public transit programs that help the elderly and the disabled as well as the general public access transport, and programs that enhance the incorporation of bike and pedestrian facilities. Also added into the FORWARD mix is faster delivery of some highway

projects by allowing up to 5% of the dollars spent on transportation programs to be committed to alternative delivery procurement methods, rather than the traditional design-bid-build.

With respect to seeking greater cost sharing from cities for projects, we ask that the legislature balance the desire for partnership with cities' ability to pay. The transportation system for Kansas is just that – a system. The “how, why, and when” for work on the system cannot be driven too much by what project has the most non-state funding. Under the existing KDOT cost share program, cities are encouraged to make a match higher than the minimum requirement (which varies from 15% to 25%). We know that cities looking to benefit from the new \$5m broadband program will need to budget for development costs and at least 50% of the construction costs. Such figures are no small ask for any city in Kansas; we encourage the legislature to be cognizant of that.

For the reasons explained, the League supports SB 375 and respectfully asks this Committee to pass the bill to the full House for consideration.